



**PEOPLE FOR
THE AMERICAN WAY**
Your Voice Against Intolerance

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

June 20, 1994

The Honorable Reed Hundt
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W. Room 814
Washington, DC 20554

Re: MM Docket Number 92-266 ✓
CC Docket Number 87-266

Dear Chairman Hundt:

I write on behalf of People For the American Way about an issue of great importance to all Americans -- nonprofit rates for leasing cable channels and using video dialtone systems. Nonprofit rates will greatly enhance free expression and civic discourse by aiding the nonprofit community's ability to serve the public effectively. We urge you to establish non-profit rates now before the nonprofit community is left without access to emerging telecommunications technologies.

The open exchange of information and ideas is fundamental to democracy in America. And, the communications media of today and tomorrow are, and will increasingly become, the primary mechanisms through which important educational, informational, cultural, and civic services will be provided to all Americans. Our system of representative government will either flourish or wither depending upon the ability of all Americans to obtain these services.

Most of the important services mentioned above are provided primarily by nonprofit organizations. However, these organizations which are committed to serving and educating the public are, and will continue to be, unable to gain access to advanced communications mechanisms where private companies with far greater resources are competing for the same space. Much has been said by industry and politicians alike about the opportunities for enhanced communication on the "information superhighway." Leased cable access and video dialtone are forming the initial lanes on that superhighway. It is critical that the FCC establish reduced rates to prevent the nonprofit community from having to compete with commercial entities for leasing cable channels and using video dialtone systems, and enable nonprofits to provide their invaluable services.

There is ample precedent for the establishment of nonprofit rates to enable organizations serving the public interest to provide education and information services. For example, for the last forty years, nonprofit organizations have relied on preferential postal rates to serve our communities. People For the American Way's ability to ensure that those rights are protected depends in large part on our ability to communicate with and educate our 300,000 members and the American public. We and other members of the nonprofit sector provide critical services to the public but cannot afford to compete for programming space with commer-

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cial entities. With affordable access to video, computer and other telecommunications services, my organization and others like us would be able to enhance our various educational, cultural, civic and community programs. Without preferential access to the emerging telecommunications networks, People For the American Way and other nonprofit organizations will be thwarted from realizing our primary goal -- serving the public interest.

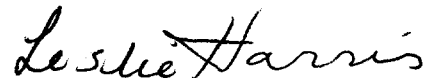
When it set rates for leased access to cable under the 1992 Cable Act, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) refused to provide for lower nonprofit rates. We urge you to reconsider this decision and grant the relief requested in the petition filed by the Center for Media Education (CME) *et. al.*, on June 21, 1993, in MM Docket Number 92-266. As the petition states, nonprofits should be afforded special rates for cable leased access. In addition, we urge you to reserve a portion of the leased channel capacity for three years so that nonprofits will have time to develop programming services, as requested in the CME petition.

"Video dialtone" services will also play an important role on the emerging "information superhighway." Access to these services is equally as important as access to cable in ensuring that nonprofit organizations are able to flourish. We hope that you will take the opportunity when granting licenses to telephone companies to provide new video services to ensure that such services are made available to the nonprofit community at reduced rates. We urge you to grant the relief requested in the petition for reconsideration filed by CME and the Consumer Federation of America on October 9, 1992, in CC Docket 87-266.

We urge the FCC to establish nonprofit rates for cable and video dialtone services and to reserve a portion of the leased access cable channel capacity for noncommercial use. These rulings would enable nonprofits across the country to do the best job possible in building a vibrant civic sector.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leslie Harris".

Leslie Harris
Director of Public Policy